

EXPLANATION OF VOTE ON IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN
FISCAL 2004 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL

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OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Chairman, as I did a year ago this month, I rise to address this chamber with a heavy heart. Over the past several days, we have engaged in a debate worthy of this institution's history. These deliberations have focused on providing additional funding for the Administration's Iraqi policy. Specifically, the resolution we are considering today would provide approximately \$86.9 billion in emergency funding for U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$18.6 billion of which would be used for ongoing reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

The debate over the President's policy in Iraq runs deeper than the discussions over the monetary size of this bill. At this moment, before us is the question of how we, as Members of Congress charged with the responsibility to represent our diverse constituencies, should fulfill our constitutional responsibilities. This is an obligation that I take very seriously.

After careful consideration of all sides of today's debate, I have decided to vote against the House's initial supplemental appropriations bill. I do so for three primary reasons. First, this proposal would continue to support a foreign policy that lacks a clear objective and fails to identify a well-reasoned plan for removing our troops from the region. Second, it would unfairly burden American taxpayers and future generations. Third, I look forward to a second opportunity to address this issue and vote on an improved bill based on negotiations with the Senate. I further believe that the Congress can, and should, take this time to reevaluate the Administration's approach to Iraq and recommit itself to our constitutional duties.

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS

During these debates, many have stressed the importance of supporting our troops who find themselves in harm's way. I share these concerns. The fact of the matter is that Members of Congress on both sides of this debate recognize our responsibility to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. These brave American men and women are serving their country with great distinction and this Congress must ensure that they have the equipment, training, resources and amenities necessary to carry out their duties. I therefore very strongly support the more than \$60 billion contained in this bill designated for supporting our troops.

Moreover, a vote on this bill is not about whether one political party or one individual Member of Congress supports our armed services. Instead, this debate is a question about how

we can most effectively support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, encourage regional stability over the long term, and ensure the appropriate use of taxpayer dollars. In a larger context, we must also ask whether this Congress will continue to unquestionably accept the Bush Administration's foreign policy approach to Iraq.

PREMISE FOR ACTION IN IRAQ

Given the chain of events of the past year, I believe that during this debate we should carefully review and studiously scrutinize the Administration's policy on Iraq. Last fall, President Bush and officials within his Administration made the argument to the Congress, to the American people, and to the world community that the threat to the United States posed by Iraq was imminent. They went to great lengths to present information to Members of this House, including personal presentations to me, about Iraq's imminent capabilities to use weapons of mass destruction against our citizens. Based on the evidence presented at that time, particularly pertaining to Iraq's alleged use of mobile facilities to hide its biological weapons research and especially relating to Iraq's ability to use unmanned aerial vehicles to deliver these weapons to specific targets within the United States, I voted to grant the President the specific powers laid out in the congressional resolution authorizing the use of military force in Iraq.

Following the failure of the Administration to reach consensus on a unified course of action in the United Nations, the onset of hostilities authorized under that resolution, and the President's subsequent declaration of the end of the major combat operations, the Administration has thus far failed to locate any significant weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the means to deliver them. Moreover, it has uncovered no conclusive evidence of mobile facilities to the best of my knowledge. At this point, the evidence to support the Administration's fundamental premise for going to war – that Iraq posed an imminent threat to our country's national security – has not emerged.

Given these facts and circumstances, my vote today signals my unwillingness at this time to blindly accept the Administration's policy position on proceeding in Iraq. Until this point, I have given the President the benefit of the doubt. I supported the resolution passed by this House authorizing the use of force. When the President came before this Congress last spring requesting \$63 billion in emergency funding for operations in Iraq, I joined an overwhelming number of my colleagues in supporting his request. At this time, however, I must demand accountability from this President in his management of the Iraqi effort and the use of U.S. taxpayer dollars that underwrite it.

STRENGTHENING THE SENATE POSITION

One potential approach for promoting fiscal accountability and ensuring that the Iraqis and Americans support our rebuilding effort over the long term is to demand that American taxpayers have the opportunity to recover their investments in Iraq's reconstruction. Iraq is a country with considerable financial and natural resources. It could harness this capital to pay for the rebuilding of its infrastructure and the completion of new projects. In light of this reality, I presently believe that we should provide the reconstruction funds contained in this emergency spending measure in the form of a loan, not an outright grant.

Additionally, before proposing this emergency spending legislation Bush Administration officials had repeatedly heretofore stated that Iraq possessed the financial capability to self-finance its reconstruction efforts. For instance, in February then-White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said, "Iraq has tremendous resources that belong to the Iraqi people. And so there are a variety of means that Iraq has to be able to shoulder much of the burden for their own reconstruction." Additionally, when speaking about Iraq's reconstruction before the Senate Appropriations Committee in March Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated, "I don't believe that the United States has the responsibility for reconstruction, in a sense. [Reconstruction] funds can come from those various sources I mentioned: frozen assets, oil revenues and a variety of other things, including the Oil for Food, which has a very substantial number of billions of dollars in it."

In contrast to these statements, Administration officials in recent weeks have now argued that Iraq cannot incur additional debt and that the only way to promote stability in Iraq is through the issuance of an outright grant. For example, during his testimony before the House Appropriations Committee just last month, Secretary Rumsfeld averred, "Iraq is in no position to pay its current debt service, let alone take on more additional debt. If we want to encourage Iraqi self reliance, so that Iraqis can fund their own reconstruction and so that American troops can go home, it would not be helpful to saddle Iraq with more debt it could not be reasonably expected to pay." The rhetorical about-face regarding this element of the Bush Administration's policy toward Iraq has been unmistakable and undisputed.

Yet these same Administration officials have been remiss in explaining why reality in postwar Iraq has not conformed to their original rhetoric. Is this a question of miscalculation, insufficient planning, or arrogance? Is this perhaps a question of a fundamental misunderstanding of the level of sacrifice required to implement a policy? The Congress has a responsibility to ask these questions and to probe the assumptions underlying the Administration's approach to Iraq in light of this significant, and as yet unexplained, foreign policy turnaround.

While I fully recognize the potential logistical difficulties in accessing Iraq's resources to pay for reconstruction efforts, I remain confident that Iraq ultimately will overcome these problems and have the financial capacity to repay these loans to the American people. In the unlikely event that Iraq's financial potential does not emerge, this Congress also can revisit this issue and forgive the loans at a later moment in time. It is, moreover, my understanding that our counterparts in the Senate are actively considering this issue as well, and they have already included a provision in their bill converting at least of portion of the funds appropriated from a grant to a forgivable loan, an approach which I consider fitting.

A vote in favor of this emergency spending legislation at this time would essentially send a message that I am satisfied with its content and the policies it supports. Simply stated: I am not. I, therefore, must fulfill my constitutional obligations to discharge the duties of my office, which include oversight of the executive branch, to the best of my abilities. As a result, I will vote against this bill.

Just one example of the need to scrutinize this Administration's implementation of reconstruction efforts is the repairs made to an Iraqi cement factory. Rather than spending the \$15 million U.S. engineers estimated it would cost to transform the factory into a state-of-the-art facility, our troops worked with Iraqis to make the factory operational at a cost of just \$80,000.

Moreover, voting against the initial House proposal at this time will, in my view, strengthen the Senate's position as we move into negotiations between the House and Senate on this important legislation and, hopefully, develop a realistic consensus for future action in Iraq. Furthermore, our vote today constitutes just the first step in the legislative process, and it is my strong hope that the coming deliberations on this bill will incorporate a forgivable loan provision or some similar stipulation. Observers should consequently construe my vote following the initial debate in the House over this matter as both evidence of my deep skepticism of the President's current Iraqi policy as well as my position that reconstruction funding should be allocated in the form of a loan to the Iraqi people.

MOVING FORWARD

The completion of today's proceedings brings to a close the initial debate over this legislation. It, however, should not end congressional evaluation of the President's Iraqi policy. Moving forward, this Congress must demand accountability from the President and officials in his Administration on these matters. Specifically, we should require the President to outline his objectives in Iraq, detail a logical plan and timetable for achieving those goals, and present long-term estimates of the costs of his proposed policies. We must accomplish these tasks while supporting the needs of our troops and their families.

The American commitment in Iraq has been thus far an open-ended affair, characterized by daily reports of troops under siege. Now my good friend and colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha) has brought to the attention of this House evidence that our troops are, in some cases, lacking the equipment they need and the amenities they deserve while selected favored corporations receive contract awards without participating in a competitive bidding process. In the face of all of these inconsistencies, the Administration additionally has to date failed to locate the imminent threats that served as the basis for war. The Congress consequently should take this opportunity to question these developments and ensure that this legislation and any subsequent allocation of federal funds include appropriate accountability measures.

The Constitution vests all legislative powers in us. As Members of this great institution, we should take that responsibility seriously. While the President can, and does, submit legislative proposals for consideration, we have an obligation to our nation's founders, ourselves, and, most importantly, our constituents to deliberate on these matters, make necessary adjustments to them, and enact laws. I have worked with the President in an effort to remove the perceived threat in Iraq and bring greater stability to the region and the world. The developments of the past few months, however, should serve as evidence of the Administration's ineffective planning effort and misunderstanding of the challenges facing our troops. As this Congress works to support our troops, we must now hold the Bush Administration to account and demand that it provide a justification for its further use of taxpayer dollars to support these endeavors. Anything less would represent a failure of this Congress to meet its constitutional responsibilities and its leaders to provide clear direction for the future.